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## Memoir of an Accidental Westerner

Rudolph M. Lapp

**A**LTHOUGH my Berkeley doctoral training was in Southern history, I stumbled into notice as a Western historian. I became inextricably bound up with Western history in 1969 when the Book Club published my first book, *Archy Lee, A California Fugitive Slave Case*. Later that same year, I was invited to the Western History Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, to make commentary on two papers on blacks in the military prepared by Professors William H. Leckie and Allen Fowler.

I should add that I came to this professional exercise from the training grounds provided by Civil War historian Kenneth M. Stampp of Berkeley and not Ray Allan Billington, the eminent Western historian. That difference would prove significant; I had no formal training in Western history. In Stampp's course, however, the fugitive slave was a vivid part of the lecture and text book material, so the Archy Lee story was not unfamiliar ground. The same was true of black military history.



My employment at the College of San Mateo required that I teach the California history course, and that set the stage for me. My Southern history and antebellum training came into play when, preparing to teach California history, I fell back into the "primary sources" habit and began reading gold rush diaries and journals. It was then that I discovered flecks of black in the gold rush sources. Footnotes began to accumulate, and while the broad outlines of the black experience in California began to materialize, the accumulation of material on the Archy Lee fugitive slave case began to stand out and ask for a separate handling. And so the Archy Lee story became a small book by early 1969, and The Book Club of California published it. Before the year was out, I had caught the attention of the professionals in Western history, and I was asked to be the commentator for a session on black military history at the convention in Omaha.

Before I left California for Nebraska, I knew that I had a problem. Professor Leckie had not sent me his paper, and I had to have it read by the next morning in order to say something intelligent about it. So it was with a bit of apprehension that I checked in at Hotel Fontenelle that Friday evening. I prepared to go to my room, get a bite to eat, and be ready the next morning for my part in the program. However, the hotel clerk was ready for me. Professor Leckie had alerted him to the problem and, as soon as he heard my name, he headed me by pre-arrangement to the lobby, where we found Professor Leckie. After a brief introduction, Leckie handed me the tardy paper along with something a bit heavier in a paper bag. He was very apologetic and a perfect gentleman (as well as a scholar). I discovered that the paper bag contained a bottle of Black Label Jack Daniel's. After dinner, I returned to my room and sat down with the Leckie paper and the Jack Daniel's.

The next morning, Saturday, was the important day for me. I now had both papers read and my commentary remarks organized. However, the experience of the evening before was so unusual for me that as I stood before the podium I had the urge to share it with the several hundred faces in front of me. Speaking very slowly, I said to my audience:

I have just had a profoundly revealing experience due to the accident of a tardy paper from Professor Leckie. He was contrite and gracious and, to make amends, presented me with a bottle of Black Label Jack Daniel's. After dinner I took the Leckie paper and the bottle back to my room and started to read and also to sip. And to read and to sip, and read, and sip. And slowly but surely Leckie's paper looked better and better with each turn of the page!

The cowboy and non-cowboy historians were convulsed. I have evoked some good laughs from classes and general audiences, but none could match the decibels of this one.

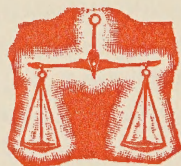
The conference was memorable to me for another reason. The papers I commented on were excellent studies of African-American military history. They detailed the accomplishments of the black soldier as well as describing the racist conditions under which blacks lived as soldiers. In preparing my commentary, I recalled the thoughts of W.E.B. DuBois, the greatest twentieth-century black scholar. He wrote about the history of blacks in the decades before a Colin Powell and lamented that warfare was the only opportunity our society offered black men to show their manhood. I concluded my commentary with this reference to W.E.B. DuBois and consequently was repaid with a moment both satisfying and poignant.

When the session ended, I was still standing near the podium chatting with delegates. From the corner of my eye, I saw two African-American women working their way through the delegates toward the front of the room. They were delegates to the convention, as evidenced by their badges. As they drew closer, they seemed to be squinting at me, and one of them turned to the other and said, "He is white!" And then they actually asked me if I were white. I half expected them to rub the skin off my face to reassure themselves, much as the frontier Native Americans did to black men when they first saw them. They told me that they had never expected to hear the name of W.E.B. DuBois mentioned at a historical convention of Westerners. But they were pleased to hear his name at the conference, and they turned out to be from African-American historical societies in Kansas or Nebraska.

And then for me Nebraska became the "Steak State." That evening Bob Burke of the University of Washington hosted several of us at a restaurant on the top of one of Omaha's hotels known for superb steak dinners. As we ate I recalled that over a quarter of a century earlier I was stationed in Alliance, an air base in western Nebraska, during World War II. My wife and I used to go to a restaurant in town where we were served huge steak dinners for \$1.25. We were from Chicago, once the home of the world's greatest stockyards, but no Chicago restaurant could match the size of Nebraska's steaks in 1943 or 1969.

Sunday evening the conference ended and the lobby of the hotel was filled with delegates now drifting to the doors to go to train stations or airports. There

was much conviviality and goodbye conversation. I found myself moving towards the doors with one of these cheerful delegates. As we both drew closer to the doors and each other, he turned and spoke to me. His question told me that he was either a member of The Book Club of California or in close contact with it. He asked me brightly, "Aren't you Archy Lapp?" I hesitated between a straight answer and the good humor that dominated the hotel lobby. I thought, 'Oh, hell, go with it.' I said, "No, I am Rudy Lee."



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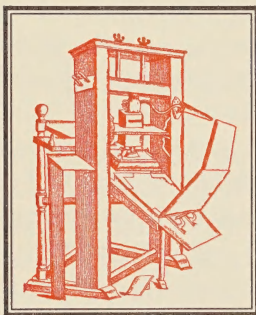
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## Reflections from the Past

**I**N THE WINTER 1997 ISSUE of *QN-L* (Volume LXIII, Number 1), we mentioned a gift from the author of a copy of *Roy Vernon Sowers: A Life in Rare Books* by Roger Burford Mason. The notice of the gift reminded Club member (and Oscar Lewis honoree) Jack Werner Stauffacher of the catalogues Mr. Sowers issued from his Los Gatos bookshop, and he forwarded the following as of possible interest to other Club members. Mr. Stauffacher thinks this appeared between 1958 and 1960, but we will be glad to hear from anyone who can date it more exactly. "The Cover shows an Old English Wooden Printing Press such as Caxton used," Mr. Sowers noted, and the article itself is illustrated by a photo of Mr. Sowers's adobe book-room in a frame of blossom.



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## Memories and Prejudices

The present catalogue includes the bulk of my personal collection in the field of Printing, and the mere listing of these items stirs memories of long ago, – of discussions about Modern Presses at the Huntington Library with Robert Schad & Gregg Anderson, – both, alas, now gone, like Villon’s “snows of yester year”! – of my first visit to San Francisco in 1928, when Porter Garnett took me to lunch at the old Bohemian Club & talked printing perfectionism, and Helen Gentry had her little press upstairs on Commercial St.; when Ed Grabhorn (then upstairs on Powell St. hill) allowed me to waste hours of his time, & as I left, gathered up for me a small collection of his work. A little later, when I left the Library, it was Gregg Anderson who printed the opening announcement for my first Pasadena bookshop; and about the same time, Ward Ritchie, newly home from France, used to drop in occasionally to talk types & presses over my head. Jake Zeitlin had graduated from books in a suit-case to that most beautiful of small bookshops (on 6th St. L.A.); and Ernest Dawson, the ever friendly guide for all young booksellers, offered me many a bargain which I took, along with advice never to collect – which I was never able to take.

When, in 1932, I moved my shop to San Francisco, it was partly due to a wish to be nearer the heart of the West Coast printing renaissance; and all through the depression, when the well-to-do never tired of telling us that books were luxuries, one could nearly always find at the Grabhorn Press a spirited discussion as to the merits of Morris or Cobden-Sanderson, or Updike, or St. John Hornby, or Bruce Rogers, – or even John Henry Nash! None of us, in those days, was making much money, but we had time, & we talked, or listened to talk, on taste in Printing. Probably the very *lack* of prosperity was the biggest reason for the numerous fine presses of that golden era of the small press, both here and abroad; because men do things for love which they cannot do for money.

Not only the Grabhorns & John Henry Nash, but the other San Francisco Bay printers – the Kennedys, the Johnsons, Johnck & Seeger, Wallace Kibbee, Lew Allen, Wilder Bentley & Jackson Burke, along with the Book Club of California & the Roxburghe Club, helped to create what might be called a typographical climate. During the thirties I even bought a Colt press myself; after storing it for years, I moved it to these mountains, though despite my hopes I never printed on it. I’m glad to add that in the hands of an enthusiastic amateur it is again being used.



So, here are some books on the 500 year History of Printing. This would have been a better Catalogue had I included nothing else; but I have clients of varying tastes (like my own), so it seems wise to include books and prints in other fields as well.

Here, on our country hill-top, in its precipitate California way, spring has come and almost gone. The drought of recent years has killed many of our trees & a frost caught the prune buds, but the orchard in bloom against a stormy sky is still the most beautiful sight of the year. The photograph of apple-blossom, orchard grass & the end of my adobe book-room, however, suggests a peace which is illusory; already we can see the encroaching suburbia. Recently, along our 100-year old road which was a thing of beauty though it goes nowhere, I watched helplessly while juggernaut mechanical equipt. tore away the grassy banks with their growth of ferns & wild flowers; but even some of my neighbors think the resulting ugly scars are an improvement. Two men, with tin hats & a chain-saw, about to cut a 150-year old oak which branched over the road, gaped in amazement when I asked them to consider its beauty!

Personally, I am concerned at the increasing ugliness of American life; not only that the lives and efforts of so many of my countrymen are now devoted to perfecting the techniques of mass destruction; but even more, at the mechanization of mind which results in the senseless, unnecessary despoiling of our countryside, at the billboards, at the dreary expanses of lethal highways built only for speed, at the crowded subdivisions built only for profit, and at the noise and stupidities we have to endure on the air to get even a garbled news report. Most of all, I am concerned that my fellow-citizens so meekly accept this ugliness as "the price of progress", when, in fact, it is merely the price of ignorance – an ignorance deliberately fostered by those who profit from the degradation of our once-free society.

Almost since the beginning of broadcasting, the commercial exploitation of Radio & TV has been a continuing reproach to the intelligence of this nation; yet when the FCC, under its new chairman, at last shows some signs of protecting the public interest, our broadcasters, who draw billions in profits from the use of public air-waves without fee, can only scream in anguish about the evils of government control! As a visitor from the B.B.C. has recently remarked: "When radio & television executives talk about freedom in broadcasting, they really mean freedom to control broadcasting for economic ends – for selfish ends. They regard bondage to economic interests as freedom, and bondage to government control as slavery."

To which I would add, from ten years' personal knowledge, that the opinion so general in this country as to the superiority of American broadcasting over that of the B.B.C., is simply a myth created by the industry. At last, Washington is taking steps to give us Educational TV as well as that "vast wasteland" of the mind, of which our broadcasters are so proud!

But this reform has taken far too long. Despite the mouthings of the frightened old women of the extreme right, the American way of life does not mean uncontrolled capitalism and exploitation any more than it means communism. It means constant change, and it means constant new government controls devised by an intelligent citizenry to protect us against the constant evil of human greed. All power corrupts, as Lord Acton long ago said, and the power of our great corporations needs constant new checks, just as does that of the California Highway Commission which is now multiplying highway atrocities. Whenever we stop facing realities & take refuge in clichés & scare-words such as "socialism" our society will be as dead as are many of the ideas now emanating from the American Medical Association & the Daughters of the American Revolution!

ROY V. SOWERS



~Reviews:

*Apart from the Text* by Anthony Rota. Private Libraries Association and Oak Knoll Press, New Castle, Delaware. 1998. 253 pages.

Anthony Rota has been a bookseller for forty-five years, working in the business founded by his father, Bertram Rota, in 1923. He is well known as a champion of ethical standards in the book business, and he has lectured both in the United States and in his native Britain. The first edition of *Apart from the Text* (there are no firm plans for a second) consists of 150 signed quarter-leather copies (\$125) and 2,200 unsigned cloth copies (\$35); both are still available from Oak Knoll Press.

*Apart from the Text* covers the evolution of the physical appearance of books from the invention of movable type up to modern times. For the first 300 to 350 years of its history, there was little change in book production. Paper making, type setting, printing, and binding were all manual operations. The industrial revolution resulted in mechanization of all these processes in the relatively short span of the nineteenth century, and book production changed drastically. Mr. Rota rightly concentrates his efforts on this period of greatest change, although he does discuss earlier periods when necessary. Consideration is limited to American and British books, and there is a strong emphasis on the effect of social and economic factors on book production. *Apart from the Text* contains chapters on the book trade, type, paper, book design, binding, book jackets, and illustration. The final three chapters cover publishing phenomena which were most prevalent in the nineteenth century: "three-deckers," issues in parts and serial, and series publishing. I have chosen to summarize below only the chapter on binding and those on publishing phenomena. This should give the reader a better flavor of *Apart from the Text* than would an overly brief abstract of every chapter.

Until the early nineteenth century, the publisher-printer-wholesaler-retailer (they were often the same person) did not usually sell bound books. Binding was expensive and often the seller did not want to advance the requisite cash. Typically, the buyer would send his purchase to a craftsman-binder. The binder's tasks were all hand work: The sheets had to be collated into signatures and folded, flattened with a hammer, and sewn on a frame. The end papers were attached, the book was trimmed, the boards attached, and finally the book was covered with leather. In the mid-eighteenth century there was an attempt at edition binding



using vellum and paper-covered boards. The resulting books were cheaper than leather, but not cheap enough to make edition binding economically feasible.

Soon after the turn of the century, experiments were made with a number of materials to replace leather. Canvas was used in this early period for schoolbooks. Publisher William Pickering began to use calico, and by 1826 all of his books were issued with cloth covering. Early in the nineteenth century it was common for cases to be prefabricated, although the work was done manually. The first major step in binding to be mechanized was the beating of folded signatures, a job that had previously required great physical strength. In 1830 a machine for embossing cloth was first used, followed shortly by mechanization of gold lettering. These advances resulted in the rapid disappearance of paper labels. At mid-century, steam power came to the bindery. There followed steam-powered machines for sewing, rounding and backing, case-making, gathering, and, finally, casing. Thus the nineteenth century saw a transformation of binding from a slow, expensive craft operation to a rapid, relatively cheap machine process.

The three-decker novel evolved quickly in response to an increase in public literacy and the demand for lengthy stories. A set formula for this genre consisted of three volumes, each 7.5 x 5 inches in size and containing 320 pages. Although the first three-decker was published in 1818, it was Scott's *Kenilworth* in 1821 that made them fashionable. Dickens, Trollope, and Thackeray all contributed to three-decker literature. Book production was still expensive, and the price of thirty-one shillings, sixpence was far too high for a middle-class reader. Of course, the publishers were aware of this. Three-deckers were actually intended for circulating libraries, where readers could borrow them at an affordable charge. Publishers issued some books in inexpensive parts or installments so that middle-class readers could purchase them over a period of time. For example, the first edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was issued in one hundred parts between 1768 and 1771. Each part cost six or eight pence, depending on the quality of the paper. Almost every important nineteenth-century novelist wrote books intended to be distributed in installments. By the end of the century, mechanization had reduced the prices of books considerably so that three-deckers and publication in parts became much less prevalent.

Mr. Rota does an admirable job of summarizing a huge mass of information. His writing style is straightforward and maintains the reader's interest – qualities unfortunately lacking in much non-fiction. He also seems to have the knack of

going right to the important points of his subject. Readers should not expect a great deal of detail in any of the areas that he covers, but I do not think that that was his intention. As an overview, especially of nineteenth-century developments in book production and publishing, Mr. Rota's book is excellent.

Apart from the text, *Apart from the Text* is a little gem. Its gray dust jacket contains only the title and the author's name, written vertically in an attractive design. The cover is full cloth, with a faux-paper spine-label embossed in red. The designer, David Chambers, has done a fine job. He has given his book generous margins and well-balanced type placement. The chapter heads are especially pleasing. The type is 11-point Abrams Augereau on a 13-point body. I have not seen this Roman face before, but it is both attractive and easy to read. The thirty-five illustrations are well chosen and well reproduced.

ALLAN L. SMITH

#### Two for the Sesquicentennial

*San Francisco, Yerba Buena: From the Beginning to the Gold Rush, 1769-1849.* Compiled and edited by Peter Browning. Lafayette, California (Box 1028, Zip 94549), Great West Books, 191 pages, \$17.95 (+ \$1.48 tax and \$3.00 shipping), paperback.

*John A Sutter in Hawaii and California, 1838-1839.* By William J. Breault, S. J. Rancho Cordova, California (Box 2583, Zip 95471), 94 pages, \$10.95 (+ 7.75% tax and \$3.00 shipping), paperback.

Collectors of Californiana are currently having a field-day, thanks to the Sesquicentennial. The celebration is bringing forth many interesting books, both from old, well-established firms and 'independent' publishers, even mom-and-pop operations. Even better, as an unexpected bonus for us, publishers large and small are using the anniversary to allow writers to work in the relatively neglected area of *pre-gold* rush Californiana.

Recent examples of scholarship in this area include Robert R. Miller's biographies of Captain William Richardson and Governor Juan B. Alvarado. The first was self-published, the latter issued by the prolific University of Oklahoma Press. Now these books are joined by two brief but excellent studies from two small presses. Both throw light on the period we Californians might call our "ancient" (Hispanic) history, as opposed to modern (*Yanqui*) times, beginning with the gold rush.

Peter Browning is less interested in the political history of Alta California than in its geography and Indian inhabitants. So his stress is on the exploration and subsequent mapping of the Bay Area. The text is not a narrative by him, but his personal selection of choice excerpts from the writings of such Spaniards as Costansó, Ayala, and Font; Britons Vancouver and Beechey; the Teutonic "Russian," Kotzebue; and the Frenchman Duhaut-Cilly, familiar to Book Club members from our recent publication of his *Voyage*. The accounts of these expeditionaries are then followed by descriptions of Yerba Buena, renamed San Francisco in 1847, by the likes of ship's captain William D. Phelps, Sir George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company, and French Consul Patrice Dillon. The compiler does not tinker with the original accounts, only adding footnotes where necessary for clarification or correction of details.

The text is enlivened by thirty-six illustrations of which twenty are reproductions of historical maps, charts, and plans (surveys). This is a great windfall for aficionados of California's historical cartography.

Father Breault's book is an in-depth study of a "missing" (i.e., little-known) half-year in the life of Captain John Sutter and its impact on his California activities. The book is also a convincing argument for the importance of the "Hawaiian connection" in the California pioneer's career.

Sutter's roundabout route to California from Missouri first took him overland to Oregon and, by Hudson's Bay Company bark, to Hawaii. From there, after a long stay in Honolulu, he sailed aboard the brig *Clementine* to Yerba Buena and Monterey in 1839, but via Alaska's New Archangel, or Sitka.

The author shows that Sutter did not just work on his tan whilst on Oahu. Instead, he made friends who made possible his Sacramento Valley settlement. Most of them were powerful Honolulu mercantilists like William French, who provided him with supplies and credit, and even made him supercargo on his chartered brig. Another was merchant and United States Consul John Coffin Jones, who provided his new friend with letters of recommendation to General Vallejo. Three other merchants who aided Sutter, Eliab and Hiram Grimes and James Sinclair, he had to pay back with Sacramento Valley land grants because he was so cash-poor.

Sutter also won the friendship of the influential Governor of Oahu, Kekuanoa, father of Kings Kamehameha IV and V, who provided him with nine contract



laborers. These *kanakas* built the first structures of Sutter's Fort, *hale pili* or Hawaiian grass shacks, and they remained the pioneer's most loyal supporters. At least one of them was a woman, who was probably the Swiss's mistress or common-law wife.

Astonishingly, Breault shows that another of these *kanaka* workmen was no commoner, but an *Alii*, or nobleman. Iona o'Ka'ina, called John Kelly in California, was a direct descendant of the High Chief of Maui, Ka'ina, who had fought against King Kamehameha I. The *Alii* forfeited his title in order to work for the charismatic Sutter for three years. (Actually, all of the Sandwich Islanders chose to stay in Alta California after their terms of service were up.)

By digging in both Hawaiian archives and Indian traditions, Father Breault traces the *Alii*'s descendants, especially his daughter, Mele (aka Maria and Mary), who married Henry Azbill, a half-white, half-Wylacki Maidu.

Sutter's agent in Yerba Buena was Jacob Spear, whose wife was Hawaiian. It was Spear who chartered his two schooners to the Swiss in order to found Sutter's Fort, or New Helvetia, and it was John Coffin Jones's adopted son, the great California diarist William Heath (Kanaka Bill) Davis, who piloted the vessels up the Sacramento to its junction with the American River and the site of today's Sacramento.

The author leaves no shadow of doubt about the importance of the Hawaiian Islands to Captain Sutter and the story of old California.

RICHARD H. DILLON

### Collector's Item

Dr. Al Shumate's last bit of writing is an interesting sidebar to California social history. It is the tale of eccentric Lord Sholto Douglas, a genuine nobleman of the European variety (not a Noble Humbug of E Clampus Vitus) yet one who became an actual Clamper.

The Laird was the son of the famous Marquis of Queensberry, who sissified boxing with his rules (no more bare knuckles, eye-gouging, and punches to the groin) and the brother of Oscar Wilde's notorious soulmate.

When His Lordship married a showgirl, egad!, and not even one from 'Frisco, but a damsel from Bakersfield!!, pater cut off his allowance. The remittance man,

now broke, had to depend on his bride to put scones and butter on the table. Loretta was a poor actress, a bad singer, and at her splendid worst as a danseuse. So Lord Sholto had to take, clumsily, to the stage himself. Whilst appearing behind the footlights in downtown Marysville he was initiated into E Clampus Vitus, the burlesque historical society dating to the gold rush. Only after shooting his wife's "good friend," going bankrupt, divorcing, and marrying a couple more times (astutely, for money, not *l'amour*) did Lord Sholto, ECV, fade from the scene. Read all about it!

*Lord Sholto Douglas, Clamper* is a thirty-six-page, illustrated, softbound little volume that is handsomely designed and printed. Dr. Kevin Starr contributes a foreword in which he explains how the devil a genteel medic like Al Shumate not only joined the rowdy ECV, but also ended up as a Supreme Noble Grand Humbug in it, himself. Copies are available at \$10 each, including tax and shipping charge, from the publisher, Windgate Press, Box 1715, Sausalito, California 94966.

RICHARD H. DILLON



### ~ Gifts & Acquisitions

S. Gale Herrick, former President of the Club, has made a significant contribution to the Library. *Matrix*, Volumes 1 through 18 (1981–1988), all that were published of this elegant and comprehensive "review for printers and bibliophiles," makes an enormous addition to our collection. These limited-edition, lavishly illustrated, and finely printed volumes from The Whittington Press of Gloucestershire, England, offer a wealth of articles on subjects of interest to Club members and researchers.

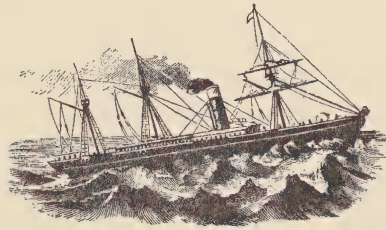
In addition, there is a group of seven books. A.S. Osley's *Haiku Types*, printed at the Glade Press in 1974, in a binding by Denise Lubett, gives us an example of a press and a binder not previously represented in the collection, and the binding is delightful. Plato's *Crito*, in a translation by Henry Cary, was published in Paris by The Pleiad in 1926, and printed at the Officina Bodoni under the supervision of Frederick Warde. This charming book made the first use of Arrighi-Vicenza italic type. Voltaire's *Candide* was illustrated by Rockwell Kent for Random House in 1928; it is the first book of Random House and our first major example of the work of Rockwell Kent. J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* was printed at the Dolmen Press

in 1969 and handsomely bound in morocco by Gemma O'Connor, another example of an important printer and binder not heretofore in our collection. Anna Simons's *Titel un Initialen für die Bremer Presse* is an example of the work of one of the early twentieth century German calligraphers and of the Bremer Presse of Munich. *The Song of Songs*, printed at The Whittington Press in 1976, was bound in full leather by an important Scottish commercial bindery. Last but not least is The Limited Editions Club *Quarto-Millenary*, published in 1959, and a great addition to the reference collection for its details of the LEC's first 250 publications and first twenty-five years.

These handsome and important volumes will enhance our collection immeasurably, for which, Gale, many thanks.

BARBARA J. LAND

We are indebted to Harlan R. Kessel for the gift of a copy of the University of California Press's 1999 edition of *A Voyage to California, the Sandwich Islands, and Around the World in the Years 1826-1829*, by August Duhaut-Cilly, translated and edited by August Frugé and Neal Harlow. Does this sound familiar? The Club's edition of the book was designed and produced in 1997 by Patrick Reagh, Printers, and sold out almost immediately upon publication. There is some new material in the completely re-designed trade edition, which is widely available at \$29.95 (cloth). Thanks, Harlan; this University Press edition will make an important text widely available.



Members with a maritime interest may like to look at Oregonian Phil Cox's account of his helicopter trip to the St. George Reef Lighthouse. Mr. Cox put this album of color photographs together on his computer, and it is quite compelling. The St. George Reef Lighthouse came into being in 1892, but the steamship *Brother Jonathan* had crashed into the rocks of the St. George Reef on July 30, 1865, with



the loss of 166 lives. (See No. 4 of the Club's 1958 keepsake series, "Gold Rush Steamers.") The lighthouse closed in 1975, but anyone interested in its restoration may contact the St. George Reef Lighthouse Preservation Society, c /o Phil Cox, 97939 North Chetco Road, Brookings, Oregon 97415.

✧ ✧ ✧

When printer Robin Price was at the Club in June to give a public program about her work, then on display, she made us a gift of *The Experience of an Everson Reading*. The booklet is a transcription of remarks made by William Everson at a poetry reading on May 16, 1975, at the University of California, Davis, and comes with a compact disk of the reading. It includes remarks by other poets and writers on Everson's power as a reader of his own work. Thank you, Robin, for this nice remembrance of your visit and the exhibit of your impressive and beautiful work.

✧ ✧ ✧

Club member Virginia Barrett, a poet and recipient of a 1998 grant from the Club, presented the library with a hand-created copy of her work, *Among the Tallest Living Things*. Ms. Barrett's poems of the West are encased in a binding of luxurious Japanese paper, truly a labor of love. Thanks, Virginia, and best wishes in the poetry line.

✧ ✧ ✧

From Louisville bookseller Timothy Hawley (who is becoming known for the humorous introductions of his catalogues), we have received the latest production of the Contre Coup Press: *For the Good of the Bleeding Land*, the first publication of a letter from James Phelan to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, written January 21, 1865. The letter comes from the collection of the Filson Club Historical Society and is ably placed by a Foreword and Afterword by its transcriber, Theophile Homard. The book was bound by the Campbell-Logan Bindery with a gray fabric spine and a design of the Stars and Bars on the paper cover. The text was hand set in Lutetia and printed on mouldmade Frankfurt paper, most luxurious to the touch. We are pleased to add this book to our library, not least because it is one of only sixty copies. Thank you, Mr. Hawley.



John Windle, who purveys fine and rare books in that astonishing hive of such activity, 49 Geary Street, recently presented us with *A Troubled Paradise*. Designed and printed by Marianne Hinckle of the Año Nuevo Island Press in an edition of 513 (our copy is numbered 196), this is a study by Robert N. Essick of William Blake's Virgil wood engravings. John Windle has also contributed an afterword on collecting William Blake, and there is a fascinating selection of plates. Copies I–XIII were issued with an original wood engraving by Blake from Thornton's *Virgil*, once in the collection of A. Edward Newton. The wrappers are handsome dark blue and silver Echizn Washi paper, and the text is enhanced by charming floriated initials, hand colored. This elegant and original book reflects its multifaceted publisher, and we thank John for his gift.



We have received two volumes for the library given in memory of Albert Sperisen. From Barbara Land came a book that Albert admired, *A Brief History of Japanese Color Prints and Their Designers: Delivered before the members of the Roxburghe Club of San Francisco Monday Evening April 4, 1938/ By Edwin Grabhorn*. This elegant large folio is one of forty copies printed at the Grabhorn Press and contains three tipped-in illustrations, one an original drawing. George Fox's gift is equally appropriate: *Chronology of Twenty-five Years: The Roxburghe Club of San Francisco 1928-1953*, one of two hundred copies printed in 1954 at the Grabhorn Press. Among the illustrations is a handsome Roxburghe Club announcement printed by the Black Vine Press of Harold Seeger and Albert Sperisen. Sincere thanks to Barbara and George for these memorials to our revered Librarian of thirty-eight years.

ANN WHIPPLE

We have just purchased a most wanted title: *The Aztec and Maya Papermakers* by Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, with an introduction by Dard Hunter. Our copy is almost pristine, including the jacket, surprisingly, because this was printed in 1944, by the George Grady Press of New York. The original printing was in 1943, a limited edition of 220 copies. It proved so popular that this trade edition (smaller size, 7 x 10) was printed with the same type and photographic illustrations and the same two-color frontispiece reproduced from the *huun*-paper from the period of the

league of Mayapan. This is the Dresden Codex, “the most famed of all extant records of America’s civilizations and living testimony that the Mayas had literature, writing, and paper at a time when all Europe was still entrenched in the illiteracy of the Middle Ages.” This is the luckiest book acquisition we have made in years, and the book will add greatly to our significant collection of the work of Dard Hunter.

ALBERT SPERISEN

(NOTE: This was the last submission for this section of the *Quarterly News-Letter* by our long-time Club Librarian, who died on May 15, 1999. Albert provided this copy on the Tuesday before, when he came to the Club and attended to library business as he had done faithfully over the years since 1961. The *Quarterly* will miss his immense expertise and wit, but we hope that we will not lose sight of his example. A memorial gathering was held at the Club on Monday, August 2, 1999, the day on which he would have been ninety-one.)

### ~ Serendipity

*Musings from the Committee Chairman:*

The Publication Committee is poorer with the absence of Al Sperisen (August 2, 1908–1999), who on Saturday, May 15, left for the great printing office in the sky. Just the previous Tuesday, our encyclopedic librarian, printer, designer, and BCC member since 1937, had been on duty in the library. In 1995, we were able to slow him down long enough to accept the Oscar Lewis Award for contributions to the book arts. Not only did Al know all the other great old printers, he was the first to encourage talent in the new – and was a very lovely man too. The Book Club’s *The 200th Book*, a bibliographic tribute to our second hundred books compiled by the esteemed Dr. Robert D. Harlan, displays the range of Al Sperisen’s design and book-arts talents. Admire your own copy for \$150.

Perhaps a haunting Irish melody would invoke the BCC’s loss.

From 1922 to 1925, talented musician Una Jeffers inscribed Hibernian tunes in an oblong book to play on her small reed organ. Her husband, acclaimed poet Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962), and twin boys illustrated her selections with rocks, cairns, towers, and dolmens, all reminiscent of the family’s 1919 Tor House at Carmel. Their 1929 visit to Ireland became the prelude to Jeffers’s *Descent to the*



*Dead: Poems Written in Ireland and Great Britain* (1931). In 1989, the Book Club used a design by Southern California's Ward Ritchie to produce a facsimile of this family endeavor. Head west from Gilroy with its Garlic Airs to Carmel to enjoy the setting for *A Book of Gaelic Airs for Una's Melodeon*. Your companion for this trip would be only \$87.

On to other great books. By the time this appears, 350 copies of the BCC's pioneering study of the great woodblock artist John De Pol, now eighty-five, should be ready – and all autographed. Printer Jim Wehlage presented exquisite reproductions of De Pol's prints to the Publication Committee, a promise of things to come. For pack rats, we note De Pol's "Reminiscences of a Wood Engraver" in the Spring 1988 issue of the foremost West Coast publication devoted to the book arts. We refer, of course (blush, blush), to the QN-L.

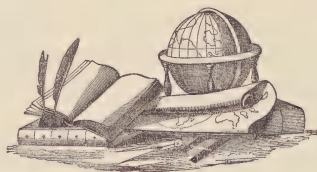
Others have belatedly noticed this fine artist. Last year, Catherine Tyler Brody produced five hundred copies for a New York club of a very personal volume, *John De Pol & the Typophiles: A Memoir and Record of Friendships*. So grab the BCC's latest, and celebrate Year 2000 in the De Pol manner: "A glass of scotch, with one rock, and a splash of soda water, tepid, please." Parenthetically, if you wait to buy, the price goes up! No sooner had *Grovenor Layton* sold out, than it appeared in catalogues at half again as much as the fee to members, or \$150.

What does a literate person read on the West Coast? The San Francisco *Chronicle*, on May 27, published a reader survey of the one-hundred best twentieth-century nonfiction Western works. Regrettably, we did not see any BCC books on this list headed by Mary Austin's *Land of Little Rain*. Yet, we still have six months. The BCC is going to have a busy Autumn, as three other books will also debut this Fall: Jack Stauffacher's *Greenwood Press* is virtually printed as we go to press, while Colin Franklin on collecting Japanese books and scrolls and Claudine Chalmers on French artists in California follow closely behind.

*Chronicle* cartoonist Phil Frank has become all too Bear-able. He still neglects to illustrate certain patrons of Hilda Da Bruin's "Fog City Dumpster." We refer, of course, to the type-setting seals of Año Nuevo Island Press, who nose how to flip letters in proper alignment into composing sticks that Hinckle and Sons then lock into forms to produce *California 49: Forty-Nine Maps of California from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*.

Just saying that Warren Heckrotte edits this sixth publication of the California Map Society, just out on August 1, exhibits and exemplifies its quality – as does

the exhibit of its maps in the Club rooms this summer. Other BCC members are among the contributors to this 8.5 x 11 inch sesquicentennial celebration, including Al Newman, Glen McLaughlin, Michael Mathes, and Gary Kurutz. Order from BCC member Marianne Hinckle's press at 2567 14th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94127 [(415)665-6937] for, appropriately, \$49 plus tax, shipping, and herring for the seals. Sad to report, former Club director Alfred W. Newman died before the book's publication; the exhibit was dedicated to his memory.



For those who mistakenly feel that dealers price books capriciously, a scholarly work issued in February puts this canard of randomness to rest. In *The Key to Serendipity: How to Buy Books from Peter B. Howard*, Ian Jackson, A.A. Jackson, and Ann Arnold look behind dealer cost codes and shelf prices to provide a logical guide to a mysterious world. BCC member Howard graciously acquiesced to this secret-baring project and sells this revealing forty-page pamphlet for \$10 [his cost, "vom"] at Serendipity Books, 1201 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702; (510)841-7455.

We were too quick to bury Spenger's seafood restaurant, a Berkeley legend for more than a century. Its reopening in June obviously saves the 1874 Safe Deposit Company of San Francisco warrior from ignominiously being displayed as a signboard in front of a pastry shop as the original Duncan Dough-nuts. Adela Roatcap, in the current San Francisco *Argonaut*, continues to expand our knowledge on the extended family of Joseph C. Duncan. Her latest discovers Thomas Gray, grandfather of Raymond and Isadora, frequent subjects of BCC books and QN-L articles. To further educate us, Andrew Jackson Moulder is next up. Dr. Roatcap will make clear how Moulder's pedagogical innovations figured in the development of the free-spirited Duncans.

We were intrigued by an exhibit and offering from the Gene Autry Museum – Polish movie posters from the 1940s to the 1990s advertising American Westerns.

Since Red censors did not consider oat-burners a threat to the new social order, artists became creative – and subversive. *Western Amerykanski: Polish Poster Art and the Western*, edited by Kevin Mulroy, is \$60 cloth and \$40 paper. [Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles, CA 90027-1462; (888)412-8879].

If Bostonian Thomas Starr King brought a New England spirit to San Francisco, Bay City-born Robert Frost took some back. Therefore, we note reviews of Jay Parini's *Robert Frost: A Life* [Henry Holt, \$35]. Parini, an acclaimed poet, novelist, and biographer, gained insights from Frost's notebooks and two hundred recorded public poetry readings to add further dimension to a dynamic, dedicated, but yet ambivalent personality.

Malcolm Margolin of Heyday Books contributed a thoughtful essay to the San Francisco *Chronicle* on April 9, summed up in its headlines, "More Books than Ever, But Who Cares?; Don't let writing drown in a sea of words." Margolin's point? In this "age of information overload," he harks back to a culture of books; of people who care about authors, content, and appearance; of readers who recommend certain books to others – all aims of the BCC. "We need to strengthen and support the social and cultural networks that value books," Margolin concluded. "Just because a book can be easily published, doesn't mean it will be read, absorbed, or discussed."

From the City of the Plain, rare book dealer David Meeker picks up the composing stick to celebrate the centenary of Ernest Hemingway's birth with a reprint of *Bullfighting, Sport & Industry*. This first and most accurate work on bullfighting in English has been out of print since its only appearance in a 1930 *Fortune* magazine. For \$300, you get one of twenty-six copies bound in leather with the signature of foreword-writer Barnaby Conrad, matador, author, and artist; \$125 brings one of the 474 red cloth copies. [Meeker Publications, P.O. Box 189266, Sacramento, 95818; (916)448-0789]





And the bull continues. Randall A. Reinstedt saw the gentle hint in our usual oblique writing, would not be cowed either, and joined the BCC! Along with his application came the latest in his brightly written and animatedly illustrated “History and Happenings of California” series. For all readers who would “have a cow,” we refer them to Randy Reinstedt’s *Tales and Treasures of California’s Ranchos* [hardcover \$14.95; softcover \$10.95; Ghost Town Publications, P.O. Drawer 5998, Carmel, California 93921].

Have you ever stubbed your toe on a copy press, but been afraid to ask what it was or why it was there in fear that the iron monster would fly up and land in your lap? Have you ever been so unfortunate as to attempt to read tissue paper copies – which invariably are too dark or too light? If you are still curious after all of this, *Before Photocopying: The Art & History of Mechanical Copying, 1780-1938* provides answers and displays 1200 illustrations – and Oak Knoll Press would like to hear from you [310 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720; \$80].

At 9.25 x 12.25 inches, this handsome book is as large as the plate on our copy press and seems to weight almost as much. In it, Barbara Rhodes elucidates “Materials and Methods,” which will undoubtedly lead to a scarcity of green oak galls in the Bay Area, while William Wells Streeter delineates the “History of the Letter Copying Press,” including timelines, patents, and catalogue descriptions. Oh, yes, “after” photocopying aids “before” photocopying: Photocopying light copypress tissue copies increases legibility. We celebrated our acquisition by purchasing an 1877 Comstock letter and, after 120 years, matching it to the copy in our retained tissue letters from that mine.

We, too, join Dick Dillon in praise of the late Al Shumate’s \$10 book from the Windgate Press, *Lord Sholto Douglas, Clamper*. Al is at his wittiest and most light-hearted in his last publication. While noting that brother Lord Alfred Douglas has a biography, Shumate rationalizes: “However, Lord Alfred was a poet of note; Sholto was not. But Lord Sholto was a Clamper; Alfred was not.” The sentence that follows makes a further point, but space precludes us from including it. Yet, we will include a note about Wayne Bonnett’s latest for his Windgate Press: *Build Ships: Wartime Shipbuilding Photographs San Francisco Bay, 1940-1945* (\$45). Buy one, and read it on the Liberty Ship *Jeremiah O’Brien* at Pier 45.

Another best-seller appeared through the cooperation of the Oakland Museum and University of California Press. We refer to Jim Holliday’s gracefully writ-

ten and wonderfully illustrated *Rush for Riches: Gold Fever and the Making of California*. Holliday picked up the symmetry of Robert L. Kelley's 1959 *Gold vs. Grain* to carry the story through the end of hydraulic mining. As sub-themes, Holliday compares the growth of San Francisco and Sacramento, and has a section on California's colony, the Comstock. Those who enjoyed his 1981 *The World Rushed In*, will undoubtedly delight in this work. [\$55 cloth; \$29.95 paper]



Any new work on the gold rush, however, that does not list Gary Kurutz's bibliography in its bibliography, cannot be 1000 fine. We have heard unconfirmed reports that the BCC edition is at last sold out. Owners, treasure your bonanza!

One thing about the chairman of the Publication Committee: He never sees things just in black and white. As with our governor, there are tones of gray. Gary Kurutz has just introduced the Berkeley Hills Books [P.O. Box 9877, Berkeley 94709; (510)848-7303] first-ever reprint of B. E. Lloyd's *Lights and Shades in San Francisco* (1876). The original, an A.L. Bancroft production [also puffed in chapter 40], is scarce, and its qualities command \$300 or more in rare book catalogues. Buy it for \$38.25 [or \$45.25 with shipping and tax] or else: Chapter 60 is "Black-mailing and Confidence Games." You have been warned.

Meantime, one big treasure has made many precious and prized nuggets. On June 25, 1998, the Pacific Book Auction Galleries presented to the high bidder George R. Fardon's San Francisco photograph album in exchange for a mere \$155,000. In 1856, brewer Jacob Gundlach raised a glass, bought the first photographic record of any city, and his family kept it "complete and unblemished," making it the "finest" of the nine surviving copies. Beginning on June 3, and running until August 14, 1999, the Fraenkel Gallery at 49 Geary Street, San Francisco [(415) 981-2661] had twenty or so salted-paper images on display, some grouped to form

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panoramas, and for sale. Moving to the affordable range [\$48] is their wonderful folio, *San Francisco Album: Photographs by George Robinson Fardon*. It not only reproduces the 1856 photographs, but also carries essays by the noted experts Rodger C. Birt, Marvin R. Nathan, Peter E. Palmquist, and Joan M. Schwartz. Yet, we mourn good ships and fine books sent to the breakers.

If readers think that we sometimes degenerate into mush, our defense is that we certainly are not as good a “musher” as Club stalwart John Crichton. The Spring issue of the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association of America newsletter pictured Mr. Crichton in [four] dogged pursuit through the high snows of the Canadian border of rare and scarce items to feature in Brick Row catalogues.

We were recently talking to a good friend, who for several years has produced a fine mail-bid auction catalogue of paper ephemera with precise descriptions and illustrations of all items. He is now closing down this operation. The future is the Internet, he says. “I have seen the writing on the wall, and it is in Big Letters.” One of his consignors prompted this assessment, after he withdrew important items. On the Internet, a seller is not restricted by a dealer’s mailing list, and with many more buyers, this consignor was doubling his receipts.

We, too, have succumbed, and have bid for treasures on eBay; lost more than we gained, we might add. The ephemeral areas we search have most listings less than \$100. Occasionally, rare or unusual items do surface, and with such a broad, worldwide customer base, go high. To encourage this, eBay purchased San Francisco auctioneers Butterfield & Butterfield, and other venerable auction houses are allied with online upstarts.

We bid what we think is a market value equal to our interest. Bidding gets quite spirited in the final thirty minutes. Online buying, though, has a rough democracy through feedback – customers rating dealers, and dealers evaluating customers. We talked to one bidder who has refused to bid on good items from dealers providing erratic service. Another dealer told us that she dispatches items without waiting for customers’ checks to clear; a bounced check will still be on its upward trajectory when she “blasts his reputation all over the Internet.”

One caveat regards items where condition is of the utmost importance – in particular, rare books. Dealers who are not professional book sellers sometimes mis-describe items through ignorance of grading standards. One dealer mentioned she had to return books on occasion. Scanned photographs give buyers a good idea of the condition of stamps and coins.

Increasingly, dealers are buying stock to sell over the Internet; a mail-order business without the expense of a store, and collectors benefit. Recently, a speaker mentioned a friend who collected nineteenth-century Staffordshire pottery with book-binding designs. This collector figured he would need thirty years to assemble through traditional means a collection that would be worthy of exhibiting. Over the Internet, two years would do the job.

At the Roxburghe Club on May 18, Dr. Drew Nadell diagnosed the True Collector as suffering from a form of psycho-pathology amply illustrated by the following joke: "How many psychologists does it take to change a lightbulb? One – but the bulb has to want to change!" No True Collector wants to change, and the Internet merely expands the chase.



Laid on our table to review was Barrett Thomas Beard's 1849 diary of his great-great grandfather, Elihu Burritt Beard (1825-1901). *A Diary for 1849* somewhat puzzles us, as most of the press run will go to the family, while the few copies of this sesquicentennial edition that will be for purchase will be sold by a yet unnamed historical society for an unknown price.

Young Beard, age twenty-four, was an ardent anti-slavery Quaker finishing his senior year at Farmers' College, a Society of Friends boarding school near Cincinnati. As a good Quaker, he kept a diary for the gold rush year, philosophizing on the meaning of life, political and social currents of the day, the ennui of continual study, and the devastating effects of a cholera epidemic. Often these jottings took the form of verse. At home, Beard worked on his father's farm near Liberty, Indiana, seventy miles from college, and, living up to its name, an active way station for fleeing slaves on the Underground Railroad to Canada.

"But the future; it is dark and gloomy," young Beard wrote on April 8, 1849. "Many are starting to California to dig for gold, but I have little taste for such employment." That changed the next year when Beard arrived in the new El Dorado to do just that. However, successful farming was more to his liking, and in 1852, he settled in what became Stanislaus County, eventually owning 9,000 acres. Here, his anti-slavery views made him akin to the "Lone Republican of Fresno," but in 1854, Beard became the first Stanislaus County assessor and superintendent of

schools. Gold is where you find it, whether metal or wheat, and “Capitalist” Beard found it.

ROBERT J. CHANDLER

☆ ☆ ☆

We learn from member Kenneth E. Hill of Rancho Santa Fe, California, of “Beautiful Birds,” an exhibition at Cornell University’s Carl A. Kroch Library. The exhibition ran from June through September 1 and must have been a true feast for anyone who cares for birds or nineteenth-century art and illustration; the leaflet describing the exhibition is lovely in itself. For all of us who could not visit Cornell to see the Hill Ornithology Collection, gift of Mr. Hill and his wife, Dorothy V. Hill, there now exists a web site for a “virtual tour” of the gallery exhibition and an on-line guide to the entire collection: <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/ornithology>



Still in the world of electronic wonders, we recently tried an interesting new web site, the creation of Club member and bookseller James Bryant of Sunnyvale’s Carpe Diem Books. Check out [wantedbooks.com](http://wantedbooks.com) – it seems clear and easy to use.

☆ ☆ ☆

Oak Knoll Fest VI comes around again October 2 and 3, 1999, in New Castle, Delaware. This year’s focus will be on papermaking and the book. For details, directions, and travel information: Oak Knoll Books, 310 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720; telephone (302)328-7232; fax (302) 328-7274; email [oakknoll@oakknoll.com](mailto:oakknoll@oakknoll.com); website [oakknoll.com](http://oakknoll.com).

☆ ☆ ☆

Last May, printer Will Powers went to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, to interview Emerson Wulling, who has operated a private press “longer than anyone ever.” Will is



involved in the effort to have Mr. Wulling included in the Guinness Book of Records. The interview was part of the "Northern Lights" series produced by Minnesota Center for the Book ([www.mnbooks.org/nl/](http://www.mnbooks.org/nl/)) and was shown on cable television in early August.

☆ ☆ ☆

Congratulations to Club member Malcolm Margolin: His Heyday Books, Berkeley publishers of books on Native American history and modern culture, California history and wilderness, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary this fall.

☆ ☆ ☆

*News from Club members Lloyd L. Neilson and Marvin R. Hiemstra:*

The complete works of Juniper Von Phitzer Press will be featured in an exhibition, *A Book in Hand*, at the San Francisco Public Library Book Arts & Special Collections Center, November 5 through December 2, 1999. Book Club of California members and friends are cordially invited to the reception on November 6, 2 to 4 p.m. For information: (415) 826-4495, or email [drollmarv@aol.com](mailto:drollmarv@aol.com).

☆ ☆ ☆

#### ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

*The following members have transferred from sustaining to Patron status:*

John Class	Huntington Beach
Edward G. Zelinsky	Tiburon

*The following member has transferred from regular to sustaining status:*

Curtiss Taylor	San Francisco
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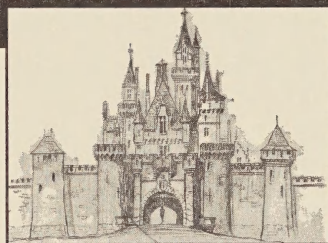
Save March 16, 17, and 18, 2000, for the FABS San Francisco Study Tour.  
Further information will be coming soon.

The ANNUAL MEETING of The Book Club of California  
*will be held Tuesday, October 19, 1999, at noon in the  
 Club rooms at 312 Sutter Street, fifth floor.  
 Members are invited to attend and to remain for the  
 regular meeting of the Board of Directors, which follows lunch.  
 Please communicate with James Nance or Ann Whipple at the Club  
 if you plan to be present; they will be pleased to  
 order a sandwich for you. ✍*

## BOOKS & MANUSCRIPTS

**AUCTION:** September 15 at 11 a.m.  
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**PREVIEW:** August 27-29 in San Francisco  
 September 10-12 in Los Angeles

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 letters and the original electrotypes plates of the  
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